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ABSTRACT

Four years of activities (1978-82) of Hajitkoum (Migrant Cultural Action Group), a predominantly Moroccan multicultural group of young immigrants based in a suburb of Brussels, are described. The group has the ultimate goal of providing the immigrant community with cadres, drawn from its young generations, who will be able to take on political and cultural responsibilities in the Belgian host society. The group's "immigration school" takes place in evenings and on weekends from October to June, and includes French classes for workers and the unemployed, and the Homework School, whose objectives are to enable immigrant adolescents in the school system to cope with obstacles they encounter in school, be aware of their own cultural background, understand the circumstances surrounding migration, and establish special relations with other immigrants. Classes in spoken Moroccan Arabic are also provided, to improve learners' ability to switch from one code (French) to another (Arabic) and interpret French print and television material to family and community. Theater, cinema, and music as means of expression and cultural affirmation are emphasized in training workshops, which have led to writing and production of two plays. All activities are both independent and interdependent; all participants, except those in the Homework School, are both tutors and pupils. (MH)

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The CDCC's Project No. 7 :

"The education and cultural development of migrants"

CASE STUDY ON HAJITKOUM

Migrant Cultural Action Group
(Belgium)

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"The education and cultural development of migrants"

CASE STUDY

ON

HAJITKOUM
MIGRANT CULTURAL ACTION GROUP
BRUSSELS

by

Melih ÇETINSOY

The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Council for Cultural Co-operation or the Secretariat of the Council of Europe.

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1. LOCAL CONTEXT

HAJITKOUM, Groupe Immigré d'Action Culturelle (Migrant Cultural Action Group), is a multicultural, although predominantly Moroccan, "association" of young immigrants, based at 228 rue Rogier, in Schaerbeek, an independent borough in the inner suburbs of Brussels, from which most of its members are recruited. The group's action is determined by its location amongst migrant adolescents faced with a "school integration crisis" rather than by a particular geographical location (1). It is therefore more appropriate to describe the local context in terms of the Belgian capital, rather than the commune in question.

1.1 Population

In 1970, 24.9% of the foreign population resident in Belgium lived in Brussels. This proportion, representing 234,275 people rose to 26.3% in 1980 (2). The tendency for foreigners to concentrate in the conurbation is probably due to the combined effects of several factors; in particular (3):

- new migrants give preference to the capital where they hope to find a large and diversified labour market, and well established and organised communities of their own nationality;

- certain categories of migrant workers from Wallonia, affected by the economic depression, fall back on Brussels.

This tendency to concentrate is reflected in the structure of the Brussels population in which the proportion of non-Belgians rose from 16.1% in 1970 to 21.8% in 1978 (3). The 1977 breakdown of the foreign population by major nationalities is as follows:

TABLE 1 (3)

Moroccan	Italian	Spanish	Turkish	Greek	TOTAL
23.1%	16.8%	13.8%	6.5%	5.3%	100.0%

(Source: INS Socio-economic survey, April 1977)

Approximately two-thirds of the foreign population living in the conurbation's 19 communes belong to these five nationalities. Their settlement in Belgium dates back to the end of the second world war for

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(1) Hajitkoum (5), p. 96.

(2) Source: INS in Delcourt-Spineux (2), p. 60.

(3) Bastenier (1), pp. 104-106.

the Italians, followed by the Greeks and Spaniards in the '50s, and finally the Moroccans and Turks from 1962-63 onwards (1). These workers spread out over the country according to the pattern of industrial and economic development, and settled, thanks in particular to a systematic policy of family settlement in Belgium, which could be considered as one of the European countries with the highest family immigration rates (2).

The most important demographic results of the presence of these long-established or more recent communities has been the growth of the 0-19 age group. The phenomenon is particularly significant in the Brussels conurbation: in 1977, whereas immigrants represented 21% of the total population, those under 20 years of age represented 40% (2). After the successive waves of "first generation" children born in the countries of origin, all the communities of migrant workers had, and continued to have, second generation children, born in Belgium. This process has reached its most advanced stage among Italians who are already entering a "third generation", while the Moroccan children belong partly to the groups born in the country of origin, and partly to those born in Belgium.

1.2 School situation of young immigrants

Hajitkoum GIAC is rooted in these very generations which are at the crossroads of cultural influences. From their earliest school years, these young immigrants, in Brussels as much as in the country as a whole, come up against obstacles which are often "the beginning of a continuous chain of failures" (2)

Many adolescents, who are the Hajitkoum Group's main concern, are directed towards technical and occupational training after six years of primary education (see Table II). Very often they give up as soon as they reach the age of 14, or their training is designed for those industrial sectors hit by the crisis and therefore with no prospects, both cases leading to the same result: unemployment (3)

It should be noted that foreign pupils born in the countries of origin are more often directed towards the technical and vocational branches, and, as a rule, fall behind and fail more frequently, than those born in Belgium (4).

Living at the centre of cultural relations, a situation which might seem enriching and vitalising, is no advantage to young immigrants whose background is not taken into account by the school.

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(1) Warzee (11), p. 8.

(2) Leunda (8), p. 92.

(3) Raynaud (9), pp. 75-77.

(4) Raynaud (9), pp. 76-77.

TABLE II (1)

Breakdown of pupils by courses in upper secondary education (1976-77) (in %)

	Belgians	Foreigners born in Belgium	Foreigners born outside Belgium	TOTAL No. of pupils
General education	61.4	37.7	34.0	58.3
Technical	27.9	44.5	46.0	30.0
Vocational	10.3	17.5	19.2	11.3
Artistic	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Source: Ministère de l'Education nationale. Etudes, 1977, No. 5.

1.3 Linguistic characteristics

The languages most spoken by the families of young immigrants involved in the group's activities are:

- Moroccan Arabic (so-called «dialect» Arabic),
- Berber,
- Greek,
- French.

In the Hajitkoum Group, the main teaching languages are French and Moroccan Arabic, the object of the teaching being to provide basic and further knowledge of these languages. It is important to note the distinction between the use of French and Arabic according to the context of the conversation: French is given preference in discussions of an ideological nature in the widest sense of the term, whereas the mother tongue is more readily associated with emotional reactions. As has already been pointed out with reference to diglossia, cases of switching from one language to the other can sometimes occur abruptly and even in mid-utterance.

Lastly, the linguistic environment is particularly rich and diversified. Dutch, the official language, along with French, is taught at school. The Brussels dialect, a French patois influenced by Flemish, is used in the capital; like the languages used by other foreign communities, it is not used by the group as a teaching medium.

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(1) Raynaud (9), pp. 75-77.

1.4 Measures for the benefit of young immigrants and «non-institutional» initiatives

In view of the number of failures, the school institution is increasingly taking measures in favour of foreign children, such as the introduction of «special classes», the bi-cultural teaching experiment, etc. However, these initiatives have only recently begun to develop and have come too late for many young people with school problems or those already eliminated from the educational system.

This factor is probably one of the main reasons behind «non-institutional» initiatives taken by migrants' associations with encouragement from the authorities representing certain countries of origin (Italy and Spain). However, it should be pointed out that, in Brussels, many groups or «unions» of young immigrants have spontaneously set up educational activities in order to compensate for the school institutions' shortcomings. Hajitkoum - GIAC figures in this category of initiatives, and can be distinguished from many other associations by the originality of its educational project.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.1 The group's origins

Hajitkoum - GIAC is a «de facto» association, no official form of registration being required in Belgium in order to form an association, organise activities or obtain grants from institutional sources. Accordingly, Hajitkoum members tend to regard themselves as a group rather than an association.

Hajitkoum was founded in 1978, by a group of young people who were members of a Moroccan cultural association which had become more and more politically involved, with little room for reflection on the process of migration and a passionate commitment to the preservation of their culture of origin; this trend had created tensions within the association, which finally split up.

On the basis of their previous experience, the «dissident» branch of 10 or so young people were moved to found Hajitkoum as a way of:

- expressing themselves, by means of a play recounting their history and that of their parents, and describing their everyday life in the street, at school and at home;

- seeking a better understanding of immigration mechanisms and a deeper knowledge of their country of origin, its history and the connections to be made with immigration.

The play, entitled «Nous ... l'immigration» («We ... immigration»), was to act as a catalyst among young people brought together by the same motivations, and immediately served to provide an indication of the youngsters' educational requirements and a critical appraisal of their own situation as they were organising the show. This enabled them to lay the foundations of their collective work and to define its guiding principles.

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2.2 Aims and objectives

The group's guiding principles are given in the following statement:

«If tomorrow's immigrant community is to be any different from today's, it will have to cater for itself, through education and reflection, in order to acquire means of identifying its component cultures. This requires the setting up of 'immigrant schools', ie places where the voice of the migrant will be recognised and valued, and 'the immigrants' will become 'us migrants'.» (1)

The group's ultimate aim is to provide the immigrant community with «personnel» (cadres) drawn from its young generations, who will be able to take on political and cultural responsibilities. This implies that the young people in question will acquire a certain autonomy and power in the host society.

One of the main objectives on this process is the setting up of an immigration school which will develop gradually and try to achieve three basic objectives, by means of a programme of training and expression-oriented activities (2):

- to stimulate awareness among young immigrants by clearly determining their «place» at the crossroads between the society of origin and the receiving society to which their parents came to work;

- to learn to use means of expression such as the theatre, the cinema and music - which immigrants are generally denied - in order to communicate the group's involvement in the migratory process;

- to organise themselves, bearing in mind that there exists a community life «beyond nationalities» and that the different nationalities are part of a whole. This should in practice lead them to act, sometimes together, sometimes separately, the long-term objective being to provide the immigrant community with «leaders who will all be representative militants».

2.3 Duration and resources employed

The group's activities which have been in progress for four years, are scheduled for the school year, and the time-table for educational activities and expression workshops is planned and organised in October. The year ends with an assessment in May or June, including a report on the meetings.

Since all the activities are run on a voluntary basis, they take place in the evenings or at weekends (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). Besides this militant effort, for the last two years the group has also had a secretariat with a paid staff of two (both members of the group), for two half-days a week. Hajitkoum also has a library to back up the educational activities. Two voluntary group members who are responsible for its management, are on duty twice a week and ensure that press reviews are regularly updated. The library is open only to group members, who, on the basis of their work programme, may make suggestions as to new book orders. The group rents the building in rue Rogier and is preparing to open a theatre on the first floor.

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(1) Hajitkoum (5), p. 90.

(2) Hajitkoum (4), p. 4.

Until this year, the group received grants from several institutional sources: some came from the Ministry of National Education and French Culture, to finance the cultural activities and expression-oriented activities (music, theatre and writing); the training of instructors and the language courses (Arabic and French) were funded by the Ministry of Employment and Labour. The ministerial grants have now been combined and taken over by the Ministry for the French Community. Lastly, contributions are also received from the European Co-operation Fund for special activities, such as outings, and by the French Committee for Culture of the Brussels conurbation. These grants from different sources amount to a total of approximately 700,000 Belgian francs.

3. RUNNING OF THE PROJECT

Hajitkoum set up its «immigration school» by gradually developing activities which, through the impetus constantly given by the founder members, were to become more diversified and structured as the group increased in numbers. From the group's many internal documents, as well as from publications and interviews, the running of the project appears to have fallen into three principal stages: (cf. the organisation chart, page 7)

1. Enlargement by basic and recruitment activities.

2. Development of an activities programme as the core of the immigration school.

3. Opening out, through the planning of an external programme which the group is launching this year.

3.1 Basic and recruitment activities

They include the Homework School and the French language classes for workers and the unemployed. These activities play an essential role in the group's development as they came before the immigration school project and are the most effective means of recruiting new members.

The Homework School, which we will use as an example, must be considered as the more important of these two activities, not only because it comes first, but also as the area in which the enlargement strategy has borne the most effective results.

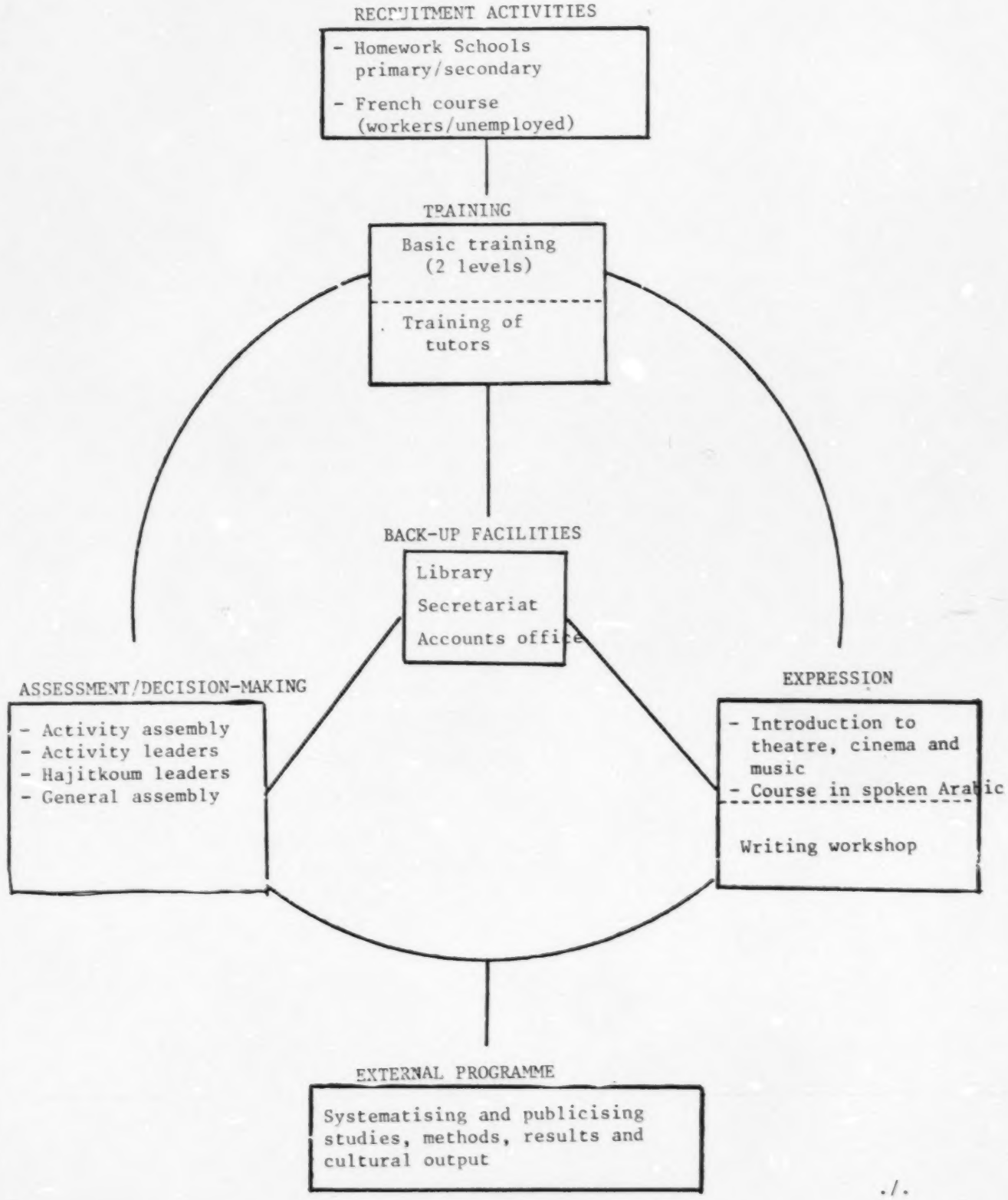
3.1.1 The Homework School

Although Hajitkoum has always organised a homework school for children at the primary level, it has concentrated on immigrant adolescents.

The title of this activity should not lead to a narrow interpretation of its content, in the simple sense of a school back-up. In Hajitkoum's view, the Homework School, which is also organised by other associations with a Liaison Committee in Brussels, provides an opportunity for:

- taking a stand vis-à-vis the educational institution (defending the pupil against an arbitrary administrative or school system);

ORGANISATION CHART OF ACTIVITIES - HAJITKOUM



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- considering the school as a means of socialisation (combating school failure by organising remedial classes);

- establishing contacts with immigrant families (the group can act as the family's spokesman in school).

Although the Homework School's declared objectives do correspond to needs in terms of support and remedial teaching, their main aim was to win the trust of young immigrants and their families. Most immigrants would not otherwise have put their trust in the group if it had declared its real objective: «In the light of the problems posed by schools the purpose of the Homework School is to provide an initial grasp of concepts and of forms of behaviour necessary for any project whose long-term aim is to train 'leaders for the immigrant community'» (1).

The Homework School is, above all, where a methodology is prepared, taking into consideration each person's level of knowledge.

At the outset, the school had 45 registered pupils, of whom around 10 were at the primary level, but only 20 to 25 pupils attended regularly. The majority, composed of Moroccans, then Turks, Greeks, Spaniards and Italians were mainly in technical (lower and higher) and vocational training, a minority being in lower secondary. The activity was run by 4 or 5 tutors (there are now about 10) who shared the work in subjects such as French, Dutch, English, mathematics and the sciences. Besides the school textbooks, press articles, sketches and photographs were used informally to encourage pupils to think about their situation and to help them appreciate where their problems lay.

The Homework School, which had been conceived according to the general objective, was gradually to develop a link with the group's other activities. «In the first year, this link, while intended by Hajitkoum, hardly materialised since that year was essentially devoted to establishing a certain cohesion among the group's founder members, and to determining the most important activities rather than implementing them. It was only when the original group found its cohesion that the unity among the leaders developed on the basis of the practical experience they had acquired, the Homework School's objectives became clear, and the practical organisation of the work was systematised» (1).

The Homework School's principal objectives are to enable pupils:

- to identify the obstacles they encounter in the school system;

- to determine their causes in relation to the school norm;

- to have a critical attitude towards the educational system's norm and operation (but without rejecting them);

- to be aware of the cultural, linguistic and technical background handed down by the family, and which they themselves possess;

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(1) Hajitkoum (5), p. 92.

- to understand the complexity of the circumstances surrounding migration and the difficulty of determining one's own existence, considering the diversity of influences to which they are subjected ;

- to understand and accept the need to establish within a group special relations with other immigrants experiencing the same situation;

- to place the school within a more general educational project concerning the different aspects of life as an immigrant.

By comparing the background experiences acquired from all the acculturating influences, the Homework School has thus developed a method of «teaching by contradiction».

3.2 Development of the activities programme

The immigration school was set up through the development of activities with a dual purpose, training and expression, and through the building up of «decision-making circuits» enabling the group to develop and learn to control its operation.

Hajitkoum distinguishes two levels in the structure of the immigration school's activities:

1. The «basic activities» in training and expression, in three parts: basic training (two levels), course in spoken Arabic, and introductory music, theatre and cinema workshops. These activities are open to full members involved in Hajitkoum's general project.

2. The second level concerns the training of tutors (or leaders) who will be responsible for the organisation and proper functioning of the Homework School's activities, the language classes and the expression workshops.

Although different levels exist, they do not form a hierarchy, but rather a gradual development in young immigrant's learning process so that, once the necessary concepts have been assimilated, the trainee can become a tutor. At all activity levels, the group carefully avoids making a distinction between teacher and taught; all participants can contribute whenever they wish, out of personal motivation or according to the communication situation. The tutor's job is to provide the impetus and set off a lively series of exchanges: a far cry from the teaching methods practised in official schools.

How was the immigration school set up?

The team which set up Hajitkoum followed a training course from 1978 to 1980, mainly based on the «Lire l'Immigration» series (1). This self-training was accompanied by the setting up of the Homework School and the

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(1) Comité de Liaison des Centres de formation immigrée de l'agglomération de Bruxelles (Liaison Committee of the Brussels Conurbation Immigrant Training Centres).

first outline of the training programme, based on small units and including mother tongue classes, theatrical and musical expression and, lastly, teaching of basic concepts necessary for an understanding of immigration mechanisms (1).

Obviously, all these increasingly varied activities went through periods of methodological experimentation and hesitancy. A number of them were suspended and then immediately resumed on a new basis, while others were reinforced and became the group's dynamo.

However, after four years, this development led to the setting up of an immigration school which, like a micro-system, grows, expresses itself and assesses itself.

3.2.1 Training process

The training programme follows up the work already begun at the Homework School, making it more systematic and coherent. Thus, taking account of disparities in the learning process, all new members are encouraged to follow basic training organised in two levels, each lasting a year.

This training is developed with the aim of winning the participants' trust.

- the main objective is to achieve cohesion within the activity group in order to start «the transition from individual to collective consciousness» (2);

- all the participants are encouraged to express their views on the training objectives for the activity in question;

- responsibilities in the running of the Hajitkoum Group are shared: library, co-ordinating the organisation of the premises etc.

Compared to the learning process, the training programme's target is a mastery of concepts rather than the acquiring of knowledge, the principal aim being that this skill should enable the learners to grasp the socio-economic and socio-cultural mechanisms in which they and other young immigrants are situated. Acquiring concepts must not be limited to a theoretical recognition but must serve to overcome immigrants' passivity and help them to achieve active control over their lives.

3.2.2 Acquiring means of expression

The most important field of expression was, and still is, the theatre. After «Nous ... l'immigration», the group produced «Saltek Matkhaf», which is about:

> «The struggle between the GHOULA, who, throughout the play represents all forms of oppression: past and present - power back home and here - and the MJDOUB, who represents all our traditions and our popular culture from which we have been cut off: as well as our history which, as immigrants, we are denied» (3).

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(1) Hajitkoum (5), p. 92.

(2) Hajitkoum (3), p. 7.

(3) Hajitkoum (6), p. 2.

For Hajitkoum, the theatre is the result of methodical acquisition of means of expression. Language first of all, avoiding both «proper speech» as it is taught by school, and contemptuous imitation of the French spoken by the immigrants, their sons or daughters. Language must be «the expression of popular speech drawn from its roots in the country of origin and from one's own experience of immigration» (1). Secondly, theatrical techniques such as acting, lighting and stage management are used for the same purpose of creating an original form of expression. The result of this research, a long and laborious endeavour through which all gradually get to know their own voices, their bodies and the space in which they move is: a progress towards assertion, in the theatre, and through its own particular techniques».

The group in fact insists on this «cultural work of quality», an attitude which led to the setting up of introductory workshops in the theatrical and musical fields, as well as the course in spoken Arabic listed as a related activity. The introductory «theatre» workshop has been organised since last year, and has been extended to research in cinematic expression.

The workshop attempts to develop a collective memory from personal experiences and observations in places such as the underground, law courts (immigrants' trials) and the neighbourhood. These situations are then re-created by the participants in the form of exercises, with the aim of overcoming personal difficulties in interpretation so as to move on to the improvisation stage. The workshop, therefore, besides being a means of acquiring theatrical techniques, is also an emotional outlet.

While the music workshop predates the theatre workshop, it is still uncertain of its method and approach to the subject, still at the stage of looking for an original form of expression.

3.2.3 Classes in spoken Arabic

They were set up in 1978, the first stage being a course in written classical Arabic. This experiment turned out to be a failure, leading to a new approach and a decision to teach popular Arabic. The objective of this course is to facilitate communication in the family and the community.

The method consists in enabling learners to «interpret», in the mother tongue, a newspaper article or a newsreel sequence. The objective is to improve the ability to switch from one code to another according to the situation: the learner must accordingly be able to select the appropriate variety, style or register for each communication. A demanding type of operation in this change will consist, for instance, in switching from standard written French to spoken Moroccan Arabic.

One of the essential aspects, and the most interesting of the Hajitkoum Group's work, is that no linguistic variety is given preference to the detriment of the others: the objective is not to teach the standard

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(1) Hajitkoum (6), p. 2.

language, but rather to improve the ability to communicate and to find the appropriate combination of a given form of speech and a given situation, ie to learn the functional specialisation of each form of speech.

3.3 Decision-making circuit

In order to assess the activities, decide which lines of action should be taken, and thus try to control its general operation, the group has established an «inter-relational reflection» circuit. Each participant, whether tutor or learner (apart from pupils at the recruitment stage), is therefore entitled to take part in the different assemblies which are structured as follows:

- a monthly assembly, called «activity assembly», consisting of all the participants in the one activity, which assesses the previous month's work and may take decisions on future projects;

- for each activity, a meeting of its leaders, at intervals dictated by the particular activity's organisation. The leaders consider techniques, methodology and the activity's general and specific objectives. They ensure that every member participates and takes on responsibility, organise the monthly assembly and prepare its report for the general assembly;

- the fortnightly assembly of all the Hajitkoum Group's leaders, which takes stock of the group's work as a whole, deals with external contacts, collects the guideline proposals submitted by the activity assemblies, studies them according to the group's general aims and internal organisation, and convenes the general assembly;

- the bi-monthly general assembly, involving all the participants, includes an appraisal of, and a debate on, the specific aims of each activity and those common to all of them. The members of the activity leaders' assembly take turns as chairman and rapporteur.

Whatever the decision-making channels adopted, general decisions in an activity or in the group are always taken collectively. Considering that, over and above this organisation, each member is involved in at least two activities, one can appreciate to what extent members are involved in running the group which, as its activities expand, is activated by an increasingly complex network of interrelations.

4. EVALUATION

At the time of writing, the Hajitkoum Group is entering a second phase of its general development. The first years of operation were devoted to setting up the training programme which is the basis of the immigration school. This phase of internal structuring and attempting to establish teaching methodologies was characterised by an introspective attitude on the part of the group. Indeed a comnined effort by members was necessary to determine the group's identity, express its beliefs and readjust its medium-term objectives. This cohesion is indispensable for any opening out or militant action which may now be considered.

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The work done this year clearly demonstrates the new direction of the group's activities. While maintaining and improving the teaching programme, Hajitkoum is introducing a number of projects, such as providing a multipurpose room to serve as a centre for expression and permanent contacts ouside the group. This year again, the theatre is the means of achieving this opening out. In the same context of the «external programme», Hajitkoum intends to contribute articles to the «Sans Frontière» monthly journal, which is offering to devote a page to the group in each edition. This project will be established very shortly, as will a writing workshop connected to the group's project which will be an opportunity to discuss and consider the significance of written expression, and to begin research work on the links between writing and immigration. This activity should then develop towards listing and categorising the languages used by immigrants. The group is also considering a «co-operative» project, the nature of which is to be clarified and connected to the group's life and structure, and to each individual's own plans. Its main aim would be to provide jobs for all the members of the group.

4.1 Objectives achieved

«The results are meagre in comparison with the human investment involved», noted one of the group's founder members. It seems natural that in the delicate phase of launching a new initiative a significant part of the energy brought to bear should go for nothing. The Hajitkoum Group's work must therefore be judged not by the effort put into it, since it only represents the resources employed, but by the results obtained.

In this sense, it seems clear that most of the first phase's objectives have been achieved; others seem likely to be achieved in the near future. The immigration school, whose realisation - or at least foundation - had been set as one of the group's objectives, is now a dynamic reality operating and drawing energy from the individual and collective commitment of its members.

The Homework School provided Hajitkoum with the majority of its members who have already taken on the role of «social multipliers», and today have the responsibility of training other newly arrived members. The process of making young immigrants aware of immigration's socio-political mechanisms is quite evidently under way and, in later stage, will lead to an increasing command of abstraction and the development of judgement.

4.2 Unplanned effects

Although the Hajitkoum Group has set as an objective the acquiring of means of expression, and had organised musical, theatrical and cinematic training workshops, it had never explicitly aimed at written expression, but this rapidly assumed considerable importance. Written output originated in the challenging of the school norm and the non-directive nature of the activities encouraging all participants to express themselves freely. The group was then brought to consider the question of language which was neither

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school French nor bound up with the cultural universe of many writers (1); culture confrontation and the resulting shock gave rise to a free form of speech. A series of works on immigration written for immigrants was launched, with the publication of a first collection in 1981.

Another unplanned effect is the appearance of friendship ties between the group members, reinforcing the links formed by the feeling of belonging to a collective project and of individual enhancement. However, owing to the limited sphere of social relations in which young immigrants usually live, it was necessary for the group to go through a period of self-isolation and introspectiveness so as to create a reassuring environment. The strengthening of friendships helped considerably in creating an atmosphere of confidence and in opening the group up to the outside world.

4.3 Participants' opinion

As the work undertaken by the group requires a voluntary commitment, participants, tutors as well as pupils, clearly approve of the Hajitkoum project as a whole. By and large, the efforts of one side come up to the expectations of the other.

However, there are differences - and these are never hushed up - over the question of enlarging the group by accepting new members: for instance, the setting up of a «special group» for Greeks, whose work would centre more specifically on Greece, just as the activities of Moroccan members are related more specifically to their society or origin. These activities, which were due to begin in September 1982, failed to get under way and are still being discussed; the question, admittedly, is how they are to fit into and connect with the general running of activities, rather than the principle itself.

The group is open to all nationalities and has included, from the outset, Moroccans (Berbers and others), Greeks and Belgians. Its concern for an outgoing attitude is also demonstrated by the fact that the Homework School is open to all young people and it has always accepted them according to their need for remedial teaching and their training expectations, rather than on grounds of nationality or origin. This attitude suggests an intercultural approach to the phenomenon of migration; and such an approach is in fact implicit, since, in this case, the term «immigration» replaces «intercultural» which tends to create a feeling of suspicion. As one of the tutors points out, «cultures are not fixed, and the debate on intercultural relations might have the effect of creating barriers». However, now that the group has built up an internal cohesion and begun to open out, a bold approach to this issue, from the angle of cultural dynamics, could help to break down barriers. Immigration mechanisms could then be studied in a new light.

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(1) Hamadi (7), p. 6.

Hajitkoum's long-term objective is to transform the school system, and, for this purpose, it is a member of the Homework School's Liaison Committee. It seems, however, that relations between the group and teachers have so far been very limited, as Hajitkoum did not wish to tackle this aspect of the problem to begin with.

As regards immigrant parents, a number of ideological obstacles prompted the group to keep its distance from the communities, while at the same time helping to win over the family by involving the children in its activities.

The French course for workers and the unemployed, and the Homework School (primary level) both developed according to this integration plan. They are no longer activities which only offer services, but are already a form of training, for instance, at the primary level which is no longer called «homework school» but «Children's expression and education workshop». Moreover, this now only involves the brothers and sisters of persons who are already members of the group.

5. TRANSFERABILITY

5.1 Specificity of the group

On the basis of this report, there is an obvious connection between Hajitkoum GIAC and the Italian Social Action Centre - Workers' University (CASI - OU) which has already been the subject of a case study (1). Relatively speaking, Hajitkoum is in the early stages of a dynamic process set in motion much earlier by CASI.

Moreover, although this type of comparison may seem necessary in terms of certain common objectives such as «training leaders from the immigrant community», it is nevertheless limited with regard to the Hajitkoum Group's origins, internal organisation and planning of future activities.

The Hajitkoum Group is the creation of young working class immigrants who, at one time or another, have experienced school difficulties which have sometimes marginalised or excluded them. This, together with its educational action, is what makes the group different: the aim is that, through its own energy, directly provided by the participants' efforts, those involved will progress from having a few fragments of knowledge of the «subculture lavished by schools» to a command of concepts and means of expression, enabling them to understand the mechanisms of the receiving society and the society of origin, and to act on them.

Another of the Hajitkoum Group's peculiarities can be found in its internal functioning, which takes the form of a self-managed and self-regulating microsystem, with one ultimate purpose. All the activities are both independent and interdependent, and all the participants - except those in the Homework School - are both tutors and pupils, taking part in the running of the group through the discussion and decision-making channels. The extent of this participation varies according to

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(1) Ricardo-Marques (10).

each person's experience and level of responsibility, and the founder members' job of giving impetus, although it remains important, has already been extended to other participants who have followed the training programme. The running mechanisms are made more complex by the outward and upward extension of new activities, and are developing into an increasingly significant hierarchy among the different stages; the «systematisation - external programme» stage, introduced last year, is now the highest level.

The Hajitkoum Group's experiment is not limited in time. It is derived from the militant efforts of young immigrants training themselves to attain a certain independence providing them with power, without conforming with the prevailing models or blindly sharing the simplistic political appraisals of certain immigrant bodies; it is also a «responsible» view of power, which is sought and found in the fact of the intellectual paternalism of some and the instinctive xenophobia of others. In this sense, there is a long way to go; and everything suggests that Hajitkoum has gone the right way about achieving its ends. Its action will therefore inevitably continue, and encouragement and support should be given to it without limiting its independence or its aims.

5.2 Generalisation and precautions to be taken

Hajitkoum's action can be repeated elsewhere as regards its operational organisation, but scarcely as regards its history. Admittedly a certain potential exists in all migrant communities, and every population movement has led to its own initiatives, whether or not as a reaction to the process of integration. A number of precautions must therefore be taken, particularly to acknowledge the fact that young people should look after themselves, avoiding the pitfall of any (institutional or non-institutional) supervision which might stand in the way of their independence. It is then necessary to detect potential and carefully channel it in the right direction.

Moreover, the Hajitkoum Group's coherence is due to the critical eye it keeps on its own action. This coherence remains possible in restricted groups, but any excessive enlargement would bring into question the organisation system and lead to a break-up.

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